DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 433 281 SO 031 030

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TITLE Applying Hofstede's Cross-Cultural Theory of Organizations to School Governance: A French Case Study.

PUB DATE 1999-04-16

NOTE 35p.; Paper presented at the Comparative and International Education Society Conference (Toronto, Ontario, Canada, April 16, 1999).

PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative (142) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Comparative Education; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; *Organizational Theories; *Public Schools; *School Administration

IDENTIFIERS *France; Hofstede (Geert); *Organizational Culture; Organizational Research; Organizational Structure; Theoretical Orientation

ABSTRACT

This paper applies Geert Hofstede's cross-cultural theory of organizational structure and behavior to school administration, examining the governance structure of the French public school system to determine how accurately it predicts the form of that educational organization. The first section of the paper presents Hofstede's theory and his findings on French organizational attitudes. Next, the paper describes methodology for the study which is based on a re-analysis of data gathered over the course of 15 years. It then presents findings. Finally, the paper closes with a general discussion of the predictive power of Hofstede's theory when applied to the French case study data. Contains 21 references. Appendixes contain 6 figures. (BT)

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Applying Hofstede's Cross-Cultural Theory of Organizations to School Governance:

A French Case Study

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Presented at the Comparative and International Education Society Conference
April 16, 1999

Toronto, Ontario

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Introduction

Sooner or later, in almost any American discussion of French education, someone is likely to recount a well-worn anecdote. It concerns a French Minister of Education who, throned on high in his Paris office, used to boast that at any given minute he knew exactly which line of Virgil all of the ninth graders in France were translating. The anecdote can be traced to the nineteenth century writer Hippolyte Taine (Crozier, 1964), but contemporary scholars are skeptical about its accuracy. Lewis (1985) doubts that the French school system was ever as uniform as this tale suggests. Crozier (1964) believes that if such uniformity ever existed, it ended with the Second Empire, which collapsed about 1870. Why, then, does this questionable legend persist in American folklore about France? In a discussion of American stereotypes of France, Wylie (1981) suggests that "the American concept of what the French are like tells us more about the Americans than about the French. . . ." (p. 15). Probably this story reflects Americans' attitudes toward centralization and bureaucracy as well as their belief that these organizational forms are inevitably linked with the loss of the individualism and spontaneity which they hold dear.

This view is the result, not of thought or experience, but of deeply held cultural values (Hofstede, 1984). It demonstrates the pitfalls which anyone who studies the school system of another nation is likely to encounter if cultural differences are overlooked. It also suggests the importance of understanding both one's own culture and that of the country under study in some systematic way in order to avoid making the most obvious mistakes of interpretation. Such a recognition of the importance of taking cultural differences into account is probably the reason for recent interest in applying Geert Hofstede's cross-cultural theory of organizational structure and behavior to school administration. Rosenblatt and Somech (1998), both Israelis, used his theory

as part of the theoretical framework in their study of the work behavior of elementary principals in Israel while two New Zealanders, Dimmock and Walker (1998), used it as one of their sources in developing a "cross-cultural conceptual framework" to employ in comparing educational administration in different countries. In this paper, then, Hofstede's theory will be applied to the governance structure of the French public school system in an attempt to determine how accurately it predicts the form of that educational organization. The first section of the paper will present Hofstede's theory and his findings on French organizational attitudes. Next, the methodology for this study will be described. After the findings have been presented, the paper will close with a general discussion of the predictive power of Hofstede's theory when applied to the French case study data.

Theoretical Framework

Overview of Hofstede's Research

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Geert Hofstede, a Dutch sociologist, worked as a personnel researcher for the European headquarters of IBM, which at that time had offices in about 100 countries. As part of his assignment, Hofstede worked with a team of international researchers to develop a 180-item survey of employee attitudes. Over the next seven years, the survey was translated into 18 languages and administered to about 88,000 respondents in 66 countries. By the mid-1970s, Hofstede (who no longer worked for IBM), had become aware of strong national patterns in the answers to the survey and requested access to the data bank in order to re-analyze it statistically to verify and study these patterns. His analysis identified four dimensions of national culture: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism, and masculinity. In addition, Hofstede plotted scores on power distance against those on uncertainty

avoidance to identify four preferred organizational models and scores on uncertainty avoidance against those on masculinity to identify four motivational patterns (Hofstede, 1980).

Over the next two decades, Hofstede further refined his theory. Data from several new countries were added to the data bank; and, after the Soviet Union collapsed, a re-analysis of the data permitted the addition of some Eastern European countries to the study (Hofstede, 1996b). In an attempt to reduce the Western bias of Hofstede's theory, Michael Bond worked with Chinese social scientists to develop a "Chinese value survey" which was administered to students in 23 countries. This research project led to the discovery of a fifth dimension of national culture, long-term orientation (Hofstede, 1991). However, since France was not included in Bond's study and no data on long-term orientation exist for it, the fifth dimension will be omitted from this study.

Hofstede's Four Dimensions of National Culture

Power Distance. Hofstede's analysis of his survey data revealed that national cultures differ along four dimensions. The first of these, "power distance," relates to the fact that in every society people have unequal power. In high power distance cultures, people readily accept hierarchical organizational structures as well as great disparities in the amount of power available to different individuals. In these countries, power is usually centralized in the hands of a few individuals at the top of a hierarchy. The ideal boss is "a benevolent autocrat or 'good father'" (Hofstede, 1991, p. 35). In contrast, nations which had low power distance scores in Hofstede's study prefer a more equal distribution of power in organizations. In these societies, people tend to minimize inequalities and prefer decentralized organizations. The ideal boss is a democratic one who has few special privileges and does not display status symbols (Hofstede, 1991).

Uncertainty Avoidance. A second cultural variable is "uncertainty avoidance." Hofstede (1991) explains uncertainty avoidance as "The extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations" (p. 113). Countries with high uncertainty avoidance scores tend to have citizens with high levels of general anxiety and are often countries which have a history of military invasion, attack, or defeat. In such cultures, organizational leaders are likely to emphasize rules, procedures, planning, and short-term feedback; employees want and expect structured environments. Where the need to avoid uncertainty is low, people strongly dislike formal rules and prefer small organizations which operate within broad guidelines rather than a rigid structure of rules and procedures.

Individualism. Hofstede's third cultural dimension is individualism; countries range from those which are highly individualistic to those which have a collectivist outlook. Individualism correlates with national wealth. In individualistic cultures, people like variety and autonomy, value individual initiative, and want freedom on the job. They expect challenging work and are motivated to work primarily in order to advance their own self-interest. In less individualistic cultures, orderliness, security, and moral obligations to the group are stressed. Workers tend to be emotionally dependent on and loyal to their employer and believe group decisions are better than individual ones.

Masculinity. Hofstede's (1984) fourth cultural dimension is, rather unfortunately, called *masculinity*. He asserts that "masculine" cultures tend to place a high value on recognition, challenge, and advancement. Workers in such cultures want to earn high salaries and do not mind competing with others for them. In contrast in less "masculine" (or "feminine") countries, workers place a high value on good relationships, a pleasant environment, cooperation, and

service. There, "the maintenance of good interpersonal relations is a strong motivator" (Hofstede, 1996a). In "masculine" countries, women subscribe to "masculine" values also, but less strongly than do men. Conversely, men in "feminine" cultures subscribe to "feminine" values, but less strongly than the women. As Hofstede (1993) puts it: "In feminine cultures, men and women are both expected to be non-competitive, modest, concerned with relationships, and to sympathize with whatever is small and weak" (p. 2).

Hofstede's Integration of the Dimensions

Preferred Organization Forms. Hofstede (1980, 1984, 1987) plots countries' scores on the cultural dimensions of power distance and uncertainty avoidance against each other to divide national cultures into four groups, according to the organizational form which they most prefer. (See Figure 1. All figures are grouped together in an Appendix at the end of the paper.) The first organizational form, the "village market" is preferred in countries which combine small power distance with weak uncertainty avoidance; in them, organizations tend to be "implicitly structured" (Hofstede, 1980, p. 319) and to operate in a relatively ad hoc manner. The English-speaking and Scandinavian countries fall in this category, as does Hofstede's native land, the Netherlands. The second organizational form is the "family"; it is preferred by countries in which large power distances are preferred but the need to avoid uncertainty is weak. In such countries, a bureaucratic form of organization is used, but it is a personnel bureaucracy in which personal relationships are determined by the organizational framework more than is the workflow. Examples include most of the nations of Southeast Asia. The third organizational form is the "workflow bureaucracy" which functions like a "well-oiled machine" and is found in countries which combine low power distance with a strong need to avoid uncertainty (Hofstede, 1980, p. 319). In it work procedures are

strictly dictated by the organization, but personal relationships are not. The Germanic countries, Finland, and Israel prefer "workflow bureaucracies." Finally, cultures which combine high power distance and high uncertainty avoidance prefer the "full bureaucracy." It is characterized by a steep pyramidal structure and well codified rules and procedures. From an international perspective, this is by far the most popular organizational form; Japan and some other Asian nations, Middle Eastern cultures, Latin American countries, and the countries of southern Europe prefer it.

Motivation Patterns. Hofstede (1980, 1984, 1991) combines the two cultural values of "masculinity" and uncertainty avoidance to group countries into four categories on the basis of their most prevalent motivation patterns. (See Figure 2). The first motivation pattern occurs in those countries which combine low uncertainty avoidance with high "masculinity"; people in these nations are motivated by the chance for individual success, particularly as measured by money. The English-speaking nations are the only ones in which this pattern is dominant. The second pattern is typical of cultures which combine high uncertainty avoidance and high "masculinity," such as Japan, the Germanic countries, Greece, and some Latin nations. In them, workers are motivated by personal security which can be assured either by wealth or hard work. Next come the countries in which high uncertainty avoidance coexists with "feminine" values; there people are motivated by their needs for security and belonging to a group and wealth is less important than group solidarity. This category includes several Mediterranean, Latin American, and Asian countries. Finally, national cultures in the last category are those which are "feminine" and score low in uncertainty avoidance. In them, the important motivators are good relationships and a pleasant environment. The countries of Northern Europe and the Netherlands follow this pattern.

The Unintegrated Dimensions. Although, mathematically speaking, Hofstede's four cultural

dimensions could be combined to create six different matrices, he in fact only develops the two of these which were just discussed. In his 1980 book, Culture's Consequences, he does include a graph which plots countries' scores on power distance against their scores on individualism; however, he does not develop these findings or suggest how they might be reflected in work organizations or attitudes. He completely fails to plot power distance against "masculinity," uncertainty avoidance against individualism, and individualism against "masculinity." For the first of these possible integrations he observes, "I have not yet found any evidence from other sources which would support classifying cultures according to a PDI x MAS matrix" (p. 325), but he does not even explain his failure to develop the other two matrices. Nonetheless, he comments that "in the reality of each country situation the four dimensions interact with each other" (p. 314).

French Scores on Hofstede's Survey. Since France scored 68 on power distance--a full 16 points above the international mean--it emerges as the Western European country in which large power distances are most acceptable. (Belgium follows closely, however, with a score of 65; and in Eastern Europe Yugoslavia scored 76.) France is also a high uncertainty avoidance culture, scoring 86 on this dimension. The international average was 64; in Europe, only Belgium, Greece, and Yugoslavia scored higher, with Spain also scoring 86. Like the citizens of almost all wealthy nations, the French tend to be individualistic. Their score of 71 on this dimension puts them well above the international mean of 50, but well below the United States and Great Britain, which scored highest on this dimension at 91 and 89, respectively. Finally, France is the only G-7 nation which scored as "feminine." With a score of 43, France is several points below the international mean of 50 and therefore must be considered as moderately "feminine." Based on these scores, Hofstede's theory predicts that the French public school system will be a full bureaucracy and that

its employees will be motivated primarily by their needs for security and belonging. It will also have to accommodate a relatively high degree of individualism. Hofstede's study indicates that the country which most resembles France culturally is Spain, with Belgium the second most similar.

Methods and Procedures

This research project is a case study based on a re-analysis of data which the author has gathered over the course of fifteen years. Yin (1989) defines a *case study* as "an empirical inquiry that: investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (p. 23). In this case, the phenomenon is the French public school system which was studied within its real-life context in French society. Since 1984, the researcher has made eight research trips to France to gather qualitative data on French education. She has collected a large number of documents, including textbooks, laws, education magazines, curriculum materials, and books and articles written by the French about their own school system. She has conducted numerous interviews, talking to teacher union leaders, teachers, principals, inspectors, researchers, teacher training college administrators, private school leaders, political party leaders, and a member of parliament. Finally, she has observed in several French schools, both in Paris and the provinces. In preparing this study, she identified information relating to the structure of the governance system and analyzed it in terms of Hofstede's theory, using it to determine the analytical codes used. She also consulted the Web sites maintained by the French Ministry of National Education, Research, and Technology as well as the sites maintained by several académies (the 30 educational districts into which France is divided) to update her data with current information.

Findings

Predicted Findings

Hofstede's theory suggests that the French national school system should be a full bureaucracy, characterized by numerous detailed rules and procedures and a steeply hierarchical organizational structure. Somewhat paradoxically, since French culture is moderately "feminine," Hofstede would expect relationships to be important, administrators to focus on consensus building, and conflicts to be solved through negotiation. Also somewhat paradoxically, his theory predicts that, since the French are individualists, they need challenging work and "considerable freedom to adopt [their] own approach to the job" (Hofstede, 1991, p. 51) The extent to which each of these predictions is confirmed by the data from this study will be discussed in turn.

Actual Findings

Detailed Rules and Procedures. French culture is characterized by a strong need to avoid uncertainty whenever possible and by a deep desire for security. According to Hofstede (1980, 1991), in organizations this cultural characteristic is expressed by the development of detailed rules and procedures which serve to reduce unpredictability. Hofstede's theory appears to predict this characteristic of the French public school system accurately. Its most visible manifestation is probably the Bulletin Officiel [Official bulletin][1], popularly referred to with the acronym BO. This government publication contains the text of all laws and decrees; and relevant portions of it are regularly disseminated through multiple channels to inspectors, principals, and teachers. For example, an analysis of the thirty-two issues of the 1984-1985 volume of L'école libératrice [The

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[1]This translation from the French, and all other translations from documents and interview materials, are the author's.

liberating school], a weekly teachers' magazine published by the National Union for Elementary and Middle School Teachers, found that during that school year the union publicized 127 regulatory changes from the BO. During a 1986 interview, a national officer of this union pulled a loose-leaf compilation of the BO from a book shelf and consulted it before answering some of the researcher's questions. In 1995, a fifth grade teacher in a Paris elementary school provided the researcher with a photocopied version of the new elementary curriculum which she had obtained from the BO, suggesting the extent to which legal texts penetrate even to the classroom level. Currently, the Ministry of National Education, Research, and Technology maintains a Web site which includes access to the BO and the possibility of joining a list serve which provides the text of laws and rules in the subject areas which interest the subscriber. These examples indicate how many rules and procedures there are and how widely they are read and consulted.

Another dimension of the French preoccupation with laws and rules is revealed in their publications about the school system. No matter what topic is under discussion or who the audience is, authors usually lay out the legal and regulatory basis for their statements. For instance, in a book intended as a practical guide for middle and high school principals, the first chapter opens with "a definition of the job through the current legal texts" (Delaire, 1986, p. 25); a five page summary of the legislation follows, replete with legal citations and extensive quotations from the laws. Moreover, an appendix provides an eighteen page long verbatim reproduction of two 1985 decrees relating to secondary principals. Similarly, a practical guide for elementary principals, in the form of a set of printed file cards in a plastic case which the researcher purchased in 1997, includes the 1989 decree governing elementary principals on the first card (Diriger une école aujourd'hui, 1995). Nor are principals the only ones who must be concerned about the law.

As part of their teacher education program, prospective elementary teachers study the Orientation Law of July 10, 1989, which provides the legal basis for the current pedagogical direction of the system (Institut Universitaire de Formation des Maîtres de Lorraine, 1996).

People who visit the Web sites currently maintained by the Ministry of National Education, Research, and Technology as well as by the thirty académies into which France is subdivided will note other examples of the French attachment to detailed rules and procedures. The Ministry's site includes descriptions of the legal basis of the system and how it operates. The académies provide clear and detailed information about various procedures, such as how to apply for admission to a teacher education program, how to apply to take the competitive examinations required of prospective inspectors, and how to obtain a transfer.

The emotional attachment of the French to the laws, rules, and procedures which undergird the system can be illustrated by an incident which occurred during a 1996 interview of a special education supervisor in Eastern France. The interviewer asked when the first laws requiring the mainstreaming of special education children had been passed. The respondent could not remember, so she looked in a file for her copy of the special education legislation. When she did not find it there, she became extremely distraught and spent several minutes searching through other files and various drawers. Although the (American) researcher repeatedly assured her that it did not really matter, the (French) supervisor insisted that it did. When she finally found this document, she photocopied it and gave a copy of it to the researcher.

Steeply Hierarchical Structure.

Hofstede's theory predicts that the French school system will be steeply hierarchical; and indeed it is widely believed outside France that French education is extremely hierarchical, as

indicated in the introduction to this paper. Yet a close examination of the evidence reveals that it is not as hierarchical as one might expect. Nonetheless, it does have strong hierarchical elements; these will be described in detail in this section, while the non-hierarchical elements will be presented in the section which follows.

The contemporary French public school system is, in part, a six level hierarchy. At the top is the Minister of National Education, Research, and Technology, who is in charge of the broad direction of education policy; as of this writing, M. Claude Allègre is in this position. Immediately under him is a Deputy Minister of School Education, currently Mme. Ségolène Royal. She is the hierarchic superior of the rectors who head the thirty académies, or educational jurisdictions, into which France is divided. Rectors normally have doctorates and oversee the universities in their académies, as well as the preschools and elementary, middle, and high schools. Immediately under the rector is the académie inspector. He or she is the direct hierarchic superior of the principals of the middle and high schools, who are in turn the superiors of the teachers in their schools. Preschools and elementary schools are administered somewhat differently. The académie inspector is the superior of a large number of district inspectors, who are in turn the superiors of both the elementary principals and the teachers in their district. In other words, preschool and elementary principals are not the superordinates of their teachers (Association Française des Administrateurs de l'Éducation {AFAE], n.d.; France. Ministry of National Education, Research and Technology [hereafter cited as "MNE"], 1999). Figure 3 depicts these relationships schematically.

French educators are acutely aware of the existence of this hierarchical chain of command and of who is (and is not) their hierarchic superior or inferior. This theme recurs frequently in interviews with French school administrators. For example, in a 1992 interview, a primary (K-5)

school inspectress who worked in Paris began by informing the researcher that she was the "hierarchic superior" of all the primary principals and teachers in her jurisdiction. Two years later, an elementary principal in a small town in Eastern France explained to me that the district inspector was the "superordinate" of all the K-5 teachers, principals, and maîtres formateurs [teachers who work with student teachers] in his territory. He went on to say that the district inspector had "superordinates" in an office in the nearest large city and that the inspectors in that office were the "subordinates" of the Ministry of National Education in Paris. In 1996, the researcher had the opportunity to accompany a primary inspectress on an inspection tour of an elementary (grades 1-5) school and a special education school which were housed in the same building in a provincial city. On this tour the inspectress behaved very differently with personnel who were and were not her hierarchic inferiors. With the teachers under her supervision, she knocked firmly on the classroom door before entering, greeted the teacher and the children, and then talked to the teacher about professional matters for a few minutes. She did not knock on the doors of those employees who were not her "subordinates"–many of the people who worked in the special education school were employed by the Ministry of Health. Instead, when she encountered them in hallways or lounges, she greeted them in a friendly manner and exchanged small talk with them. She and these employees explained their "nonhierarchic relationship" to the researcher, who later wrote in her observation notes: "I felt that the lines of 'hierarchical control' were very clear in their minds and very definitely respected."

Secondary educators seem less focused on this issue, perhaps because secondary principals are the "hierarchic superiors" of their teachers. Even so, their "hierarchic superiority" is not complete. In a 1991 interview in Paris, a middle school principal explained that he evaluated his

teachers only in "administrative" matters–that is, only on their attendance, punctuality, general effectiveness, and collegiality. Even his ability to evaluate in these areas was limited by the fact that he had to assign numerical scores within an "evaluation index" provided by the rector. Moreover, inspectors from the académie conducted the pedagogical evaluations of the teachers in his building. He insisted that he had little formal power but rather had to rely on "the authority of [his] personality to influence teachers." These comments suggest the extent to which distinctions about the lines of hierarchic authority were clear in this secondary educator's mind.

Even though there is a clear hierarchy in the French school system, two significant elements of the governance structure are not included in this chain of command. First, within the school system there are numerous councils which have the legal authority to make decisions, make recommendations, or be informed. Second, several important aspects of school governance–capital outlay, the maintenance of school buildings and grounds, school transportation, the school lunch program, the purchase of educational materials, and school operating expenses–are not under the direct control of the Ministry. These components of the governance structure will be discussed in the next section.

Relationships, Negotiation, and Consensus-Building

Since France has a moderately "feminine" culture, Hofstede's theory would lead one to expect to find mechanisms which permit building and maintaining relationships, negotiating disagreements, and reaching consensus. Unfortunately, Hofstede never discusses how these organizational tasks are accomplished in a steeply hierarchical organization. However, in the case of France the answer seems to be that large portions of the school governance system are not hierarchical but operate through discussion and negotiation.

Within the school system itself one finds numerous official groups which have legal status within the governance structure. Such groups are found at the highest level–advising the Minister of National Education, Research, and Technology–and at the lowest–making decisions for small rural elementary schools. At the national level, three groups advise the ministry. The first of these is the Conseil Supérieur de l'Éducation [Higher Council of Education] whose 95 members include 48 representatives of school personnel; 19 representatives of parents, K-12 pupils, and university students; and 28 representatives of local government and organizations related to education. It provides general advice on education policy to the ministry. The 22-member Conseil National des Programmes [National Curriculum Council] is made up of experts appointed by the minister to give advice and make recommendations on the general direction of the curriculum. Finally, the Observatoire National de la Lecture [National Reading Observatory] has as its function analyzing school practices in the teaching of reading and advising the ministry on issues related to reading and literacy (MNE, 1999).

At various levels of the system, commissions paritaires [Equal Standing Commissions] are empowered to make decisions or give advice to decision-makers. For example, at the national level, the National Administrative Equal Standing Commission on Admission to the Teaching Force advises the ministry on acceptable candidates for teaching positions. A parallel commission at the académie level advises the rector (Décret no. 083-683 du 26 juillet 1983, 1983). Many decisions regarding teachers' careers (such as transfers, disciplinary actions, promotions, and appeals of negative evaluations) are made by Equal Standing Commissions half of whose members are administrators while the other half are teachers who were elected to the commission by their peers in what are called *professional elections* (C. Lavy, personal communication, July 2, 1984;

J.-P. Roux, personal communication, July 3, 1984).

Various councils also make decisions at the level of the school site. Secondary schools are governed by five different councils: these are listed in Figure 4. The most important of these is the Administrative Council. Composed of school administrators as well as representatives of local government, school personnel, parents, and students, it decides how the school program will be organized, prepares an annual report on the pedagogical achievements of the school and adopts the school budget and project. The Class Council consists of the principal, all the teachers who work with a particular group of children, and elected student and parent representatives. It meets to discuss the problems and projects of the class as a whole and also decides which students will be promoted to the next grade (Auduc & Bayard-Pierlot, 1995; Delaire, 1986; MNE, 1999). Primary schools (which include maternelles, or preschools, as well as elementary schools which cover grades 1-5) are also governed by several groups. These are listed in Figure 5. Of these, the School Council is the group with the broadest authority. It decides on the school's rules, determines how the school week will be organized, advises the principal on various aspects of school life, must approve extracurricular activities, and consults with the mayor regarding the use of school facilities when school is not in session (Auduc & Bayard-Pierlot, 1995).

Unfortunately, the researcher has never observed a meeting of any of these bodies. However, in interviews and visits in schools, comments have been made or incidents have been observed which suggest how they function. Administrators appear to handle these groups with respect, both in situations where they do have the final decision-making authority and in those where they do not. For example, in a 1991 interview a high school principal in Paris discussed his work with the Class Councils in his building. He explained that it was difficult to discuss

confidential matters relating to students in a Class Council, yet sometimes the best decision for a student depends on knowing confidential information which only he has and which he cannot share. In such a situation, even though the Council has the authority to pass or fail students, he says to its members: "Have confidence in me. I have some very confidential information about this student which I can't share. Have confidence in my decision." He added these comments to the researcher, however: "I can do that two or three times a year. Of course, if I tried to do it 40 or 50 times, people would cease to have confidence in me!"

In 1994, an elementary principal in a small town in Eastern France recounted an anecdote which shed light on the relationship between the school's Teachers' Council and the district inspector. The Teachers' Council in his school had to grapple with a difficult decision; a teacher who had just finished a lengthy leave of absence had been assigned to their school. In their original recommendation to the inspector, they had proposed that this returning teacher be given a first grade class. The inspector–who had the legal authority to make the final decision–returned their recommendation to them with a carefully worded note, which the principal showed the researcher: "I wonder if it is really best to assign M. So-and-So to a first grade class." The Teachers' Council wrestled with this issue for a long time and finally recommended another assignment for M. So-and-So, even though it meant that one of their number would have to teach a split class. The inspector's written response to them after the second recommendation was: "I appreciate the efforts of the Teachers' Council to find a better solution to the problem posed by M. So-and-So's return." However, inspectors sometimes stand on their prerogatives. This principal also showed the researcher a document which the Teachers' Council had submitted to the inspector, stating that it had "decided" to do a certain thing. The inspector had returned the document to them with a

hand-written notation on it that in this area the Teachers' Council did not "decide," but only "recommended."

A second aspect of the governance system makes relationships, negotiation, and consensus building necessary. This is the fact that, although the educational program is under the authority of the ministry, what might be called the "physical" side of schooling is not. The ministry does not build or maintain schools, nor does it provide operating expenses for them. Rather, these aspects of school governance are assigned to other government bodies. These relationships are summarized in Figure 6. This means that French school administrators must spend considerable time interacting with officials who are not in their hierarchical chain of command, but upon whom they depend heavily for the success of their program.

As a result, the crucial necessity of building positive relationships with local government officials emerges as a key theme in interviews. At the close of a 1995 interview with the principal of an elementary school in Paris, the researcher asked: "Is there an important component of your job that I haven't asked about?" The principal responded emphatically: "Yes! My relationships with the Mayor's Office and the City of Paris. . . .I order materials, repairs, etc. I have a double job: with the Ministry of National Education and the City of Paris. The latter takes more time than the former." Similarly, the principal of a two-room school in a small village related that when she first started working there, "The building was gray and was still heated with a wood stove." Accordingly, she went to the mayor and asked for some paint for the school. Her request led him to visit the school and decide that it needed to be completely remodeled. She implied that her predecessor had not built a good relationship with the mayor and that therefore the school had been neglected. The principal of a Paris middle school observed in a 1991 interview: "A wise

principal tries to get along well with local government figures." Even a district inspectress spoke about the time she spends building relationships with the city government, concluding: "Above all, my job is a job of building and maintaining relationships."

Sufficient Autonomy for Individuals.

Since the French are individualistic, the "full bureaucracy" predicted for them by Hofstede's theory, with its detailed rules and steep hierarchy, could cause problems. However, French teachers and school administrators seem to work comfortably within the system. In all the interviews, only one respondent complained about the hierarchy. This was an Inspector of National Education who was also the Associate Director of Departmental Services attached to the offices of an académie in Eastern France. Because he was frequently involved in exchanges with German inspectors, he was aware that Germans place less emphasis on organizational hierarchy than the French. He observed: "The Germans are not as preoccupied with hierarchy as the French are. In German offices what is important is the job; in French offices it is the level. This is not consistent with the popular stereotype of Germans as being all like soldiers with pointed helmets. The French administration is too wrapped up in hierarchy." In Hofstede's terms, he was identifying the differences between the German "workflow bureaucracy" and the French "full bureaucracy." Somewhat paradoxically, although his job was to oversee 23 district inspectors, he stressed that he was not their hierarchic superior, saying: "My job is above all one of coordination. I spend a lot of time studying dossiers. I never directly make any decisions at all; I delegate all decision making. Yet, in actual fact, I manage elementary education in [this département.]"

This administrator's comments may provide one key to understanding how individualists can work comfortably in the French system. Within the hierarchy, there is a tendency to place

distance between people and their immediate superiors. Sometimes this distance is geographic. The rectors, for example, do not work in the same office building, and usually not in the same town, as their hierarchic superiors in the ministry. Similarly, inspectors are not housed in the same buildings as the teachers and principals whom they supervise. At other times, the power of superiors who do work in close proximity is reduced. Principals--even secondary ones--have no hierarchic authority over the pedagogical work of their faculty, which is the major area in which teachers want and value autonomy. Sometimes, as in the case of the Inspector of National Education quoted above, the hierarchical relationship is further muted by putting an individual who is not the hierarchic superior in charge of an activity. Thus, although there is a hierarchy, most French educators do not have to work closely with a "hierarchic superior" or even see him or her on a daily basis. Undoubtedly, this permits them to work relatively autonomously. In fact, it is possible that this Inspector of National Education--who worked in a large office building--had more contact with his hierarchic superiors than most other French educators and was therefore more attuned to the burden of the hierarchical structure than were other respondents.

Another aspect of individual autonomy emerged in a 1991 interview with the principal of a middle school in Paris. He stated: "One advantage which French principals have is that they are very independent of the surrounding environment. They are appointed by the ministry and are answerable to it. Thus, politicians and pressure groups in the community have very little power over principals. . . .They cannot be kicked out by a pressure group. Thus, they are free to make decisions based on professional considerations." This man sees the whole hierarchical apparatus, from the ministry on down, as a protection from local forces which might reduce his professional autonomy. Probably most teachers and inspectors could make similar statements; the ministry and

its hierarchy set them free form the demands and pressures which local "politicians" might exert over them and their professional activities. In this sense, the system protects them both from having to work on a daily basis with a direct superior and from having to bow to pressures coming from outside the system. Thus, contrary to what one might at first expect, it does guarantee them considerable autonomy.

Discussion

This study suggests that Hofstede's theory has definite, but limited, predictive power. It most accurately predicted the French preoccupation with rules and procedures. As citizens of a nation which has been invaded by armies and defeated twice within living memory, the French apparently have high levels of anxiety and therefore need the security provided by a detailed framework of laws and procedures. This organizational characteristic was easy to identify in the public school system, and multiple examples of it were found in the research data. However, the theory was less successful in its prediction of the organizational form which the French public school system would take. Although elements of full bureaucracy were apparent, they were softened and undercut by structures for participative management and a dual system of school governance which requires French school administrators to engage in a significant amount of negotiation and compromise with people who are completely outside their bureaucratic structure. Moreover, there were few traces in the research data of the autocratic leadership style which the term "full bureaucracy" might lead one to expect. On the contrary, French school bureaucrats seem to use their power quite cautiously. It would therefore be worthwhile to consider why Hofstede's theory did not predict the limits which the French place on their "full bureaucracy." Three possible reasons will be discussed in term; they are not mutually exclusive.

One likely explanation is that Hofstede has not fully elaborated his theory. He seems to have given considerable thought to how the power distance and uncertainty avoidance dimensions as well as the uncertainty avoidance and "masculinity" dimensions interact with each other but much less attention to the other possible interactions. His failure to integrate the four dimensions in all the ways possible means that his theory works better with some cultures than with others. France is unusual in that it combines large power distance with both moderate "femininity" and high individualism. However, it is not the only national culture which combines large power distance with "femininity"--among the other countries which do so are Spain, Turkey, Taiwan, Peru, Portugal, Thailand, and Chile. France is more unusual in combining large power distance with high individualism; large power distance scores are usually found in collectivist cultures. However, if Hofstede is right and individualism is connected with national wealth, probably the number of countries which combine large power distance scores with individualism is growing. As the nations of Southeast Asia and Latin America develop economically, this pattern may become more common than it was when Hofstede conducted his research. These findings suggest, then, that Hofstede and others who work with his theory need to do additional research to determine how the other dimensions can be integrated. It would be particularly interesting to study organizational structures in other countries which have large power distance scores yet are "feminine" in order to determine if they, too, have ways of softening the rigors of the "full bureaucracy."

A second possible explanation is that since Hofstede's original research studied IBM organizations in the late 1960s and 1970s, these firms had a higher percentage of male employees than the French public school system of the 1980s and 1990s does. Although the French still have

a relatively high percentage of male teachers--especially in secondary schools--most employees of the Ministry of National Education, Research, and Technology are female. Hofstede indicates that women hold more "feminine" values in work organizations than men do; therefore, it seems plausible that the French school system is more "feminine" in orientation than French work organizations which are male-dominated. This suggests another weakness in Hofstede's theory: it provides little indication of the extent to which the gender make-up of an organization affects its scores, especially on the "masculine-feminine" dimension, but also on the others as well. It would be helpful if the theory were further developed through research on a range of organizations in various countries. Quite possibly, exclusively male, exclusively female, male-dominated, and female-dominated organizations take on somewhat different forms even within the same national culture. Since more and more women around the world are entering the paid workforce, this consideration is becoming increasingly relevant and should not be overlooked in organizational studies. It is, of course, especially pertinent to the study of school governance since educational organizations commonly employ more women than many others do.

Finally, the limitations of Hofstede's theory may reflect the limitations of survey research. While this researcher would never question the usefulness of survey research, she would nonetheless insist on its limitations, especially in relationship to such complex phenomena as culture, values, and organizational behavior. Both Hofstede's original study and his follow-up research have made an important contribution to the fields of organizational theory and cross-cultural understanding. Even so, it is unfortunate that neither he nor his associates have ever extended their original research through qualitative studies of organizational behavior in different cultures. Although the data derived from a survey can reveal patterns and suggest interesting

hypotheses, ultimately they can never take the place of interviewing people who are native to a culture. Nor can they take the place of perceptive observation by an outsider. This study, which found that the complexities of organizational behavior within the French public school system both confirmed and transcended elements of Hofstede's theory suggests that the next step in developing cross-cultural understanding of organizations should be the deepening of existing theories through qualitative research studies.

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APPENDIX

Figure 1. Preferred Organizational Types in 50 Cultures

COMPETITIVE MARKET	FAMILY
USA	East Africa
Australia	Hong Kong
Canada	India
Denmark	Indonesia
Great Britain	Malaysia
Ireland	Philippines
Jamaica	West Africa
Netherlands	
New Zealand	
Norway	
South Africa	
Sweden	

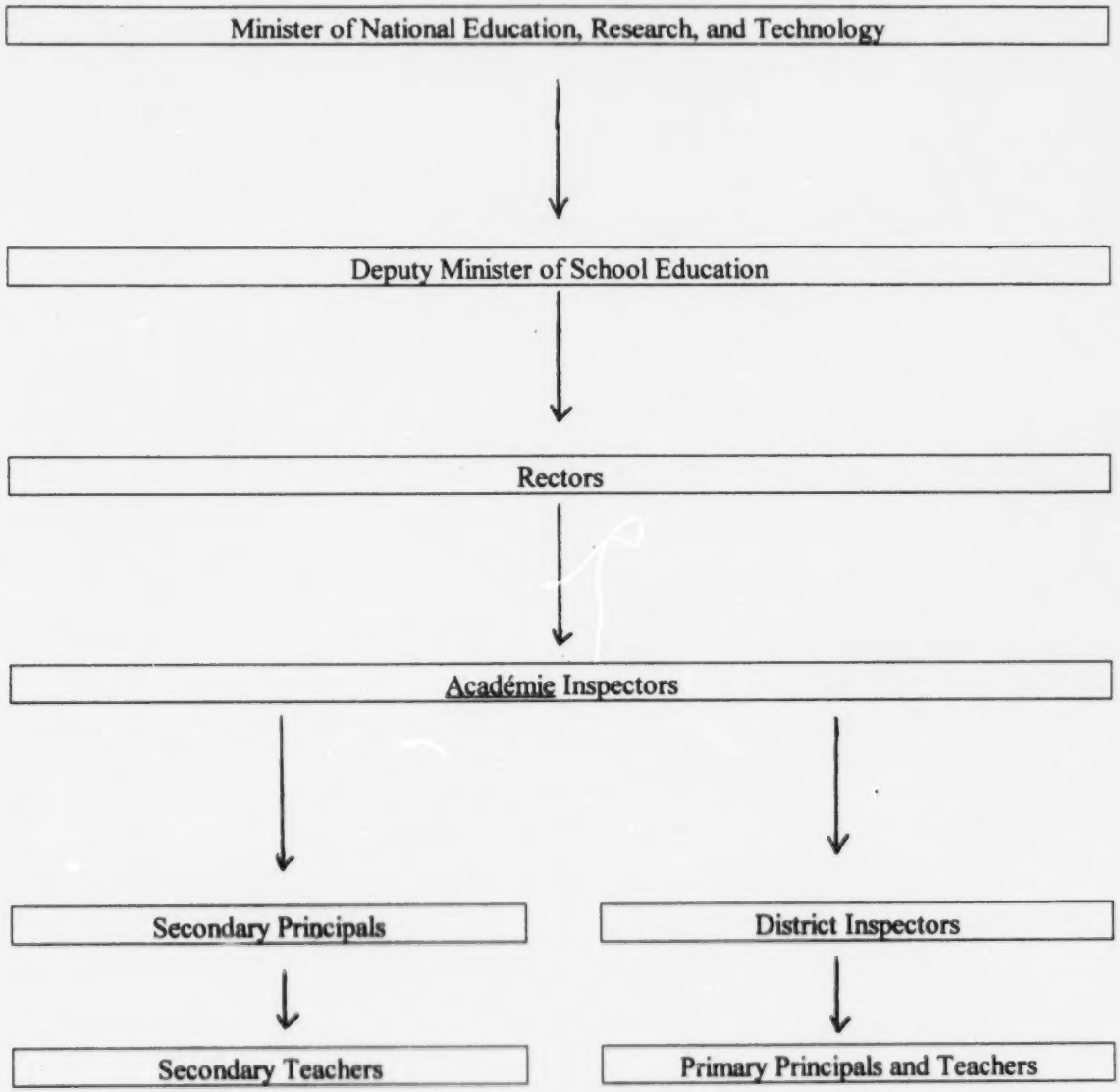
WORK-FLOW BUREAUCRACY	FULL BUREAUCRACY	
(West) Germany	**France**	Mexico
Argentina	Arab Nations	Pakistan
Austria	Belgium	Panama
Costa Rica	Brazil	Peru
Finland	Chile	Portugal
Israel	Colombia	Salvador
Italy	Ecuador	Spain
Switzerland	Greece	Taiwan
	Guatemala	Thailand
	Iran	Turkey
	Japan	Uruguay
	Korea	Yugoslavia

Figure 2. Major Motivation Patterns in 50 Cultures

SUCCESS	SUCCESS/BELONGING
USA	Denmark
Australia	Finland
Canada	Indonesia
Ecuador	Iran
Great Britain	Netherlands
Hong Kong	Norway
India	Peru
Ireland	Singapore
Jamaica	Sweden
Malaysia	Taiwan
New Zealand	Thailand
South Africa	West Africa

SECURITY	SECURITY/BELONGING
(West) Germany	**France**
Arab Nations	Brazil
Argentina	Chile
Austria	Costa Rica
Belgium	East Africa
Colombia	Guatemala
Greece	Israel
Italy	Korea
Japan	Panama
Mexico	Portugal
Pakistan	Salvador
Philippines	Spain
Switzerland	Turkey
Venezuela	Uruguay
	Yugoslavia

Figure 3. The Hierarchy of the French School System



Based on Compétences et administration, 1999

Figure 4. Governance Councils in French Secondary Schools

Administrative Council

Permanent Commission

Discipline Council

Class Council

Pedagogical Teams

Based on Compétences et administration, 1999

Figure 5. Governance Councils in French Elementary Schools

School Council

Teachers' Council

Council of Cycle Teachers

Educational Team

Pedagogical Team

Based on Achddou, 1996

Figure 6. Government Bodies Responsible for Capital Outlay, maintenance, and Operating Expenses

Level of School	Government Level	Government Body
Primary Schools	Commune	Municipal Council
Middle Schools	Département	General Council
High Schools	Region	Regional Council

Based on Auduc & Bayard-Pierlot, 1995